

Paul's Letters In Moldova
September 6-September 19, 2023

Beloved brethren,

Grace and peace to you from our mighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Today is Saturday, October 28, 2023. Beth and I hope this letter finds you well. Our hearts overflow with gratitude to God for you all and for your fellowship with us in the work in Eastern Europe. This most recent trip was Beth's second to Moldova and my seventh trip overseas and sixth trip to Moldova.

Themes From Paul's Letters

Our trip from Edna, Texas to Chişinău, Moldova was long, but uneventful. We had planned to meet up with the rest of the team in Newark, New Jersey before taking the long flight overseas to Vienna, Austria. Beth and I left a day earlier (our first flight was bumped up to leave early on the morning of September 7). We arrived in Newark in the early morning and after a seven-hour layover, we met up with John, Stacy, and Julianna Gentry, and brother Caleb Wray. Thanks to God the only issue we had on the first leg of the trip was an hour-long delay that caused us to get to Vienna late, but we made our connection and arrived in Chişinău early Friday afternoon.



That evening, even though we were all a little tired, we were blessed to be able to join the saints in Chişinău during their regularly scheduled Friday evening Bible study. This year we had planned to have a series of studies outside of the conference about various themes from Paul's letters that we wouldn't have time to cover during our lectures. That evening, I was blessed to speak on "The Spirit as a Guarantee of the Resurrection" (Eph. 1:13-14). Caleb preached on a "Call to Imitation" (1 Cor. 4:14-17), and John did a lesson entitled "Paul on MDR" (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

Despite our theme this year being Paul's letters, the main passage that comes to mind about this trip was from the book of James where he rightly said, "...you do not know what tomorrow will bring" (James 4:14, ESV). Saturday morning found most of the team well rested with two exceptions. John was up most of the night and was not well. Of course, Stacy had been up with him and so the two of them decided to stay in and get some rest and try to get John well. The rest of us went to the Corcimaru's for an early dinner and then met the brethren for a study that evening. Thankfully John was feeling some better that evening and was able to present his lesson, "Paul's Prayers" via Zoom. Caleb gave a lesson on "The Body

of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12-13) and my lesson was “Human Divisions Abolished in Christ” (Gal. 3:26-29). We had good participation in person and online that evening.



Sunday, September 10 was our first Lord’s Day on this trip. We were all looking forward to it, but John was still not well. So instead of going to Bălți as we originally planned, Beth and I went to Bender and there I was able to present a lesson on forgiveness (**Eph. 4:32-5:2**). Caleb went to Bălți with Julianna, and he presented a lesson on the women from the genealogy in Matthew and she taught a ladies’ class (**Matt. 1:1-17**). That afternoon we returned to Chișinău to the Corcimaru’s for a late lunch. After that we gathered with the saints in Chișinău. During the worship hour I preached a sermon called “Living In Hope” (**1 Cor. 15:56-58**). Then in the Bible class hour Caleb talked about “The Chosen People” (**1 Pet. 2:9-10**) and I talked about “The Ascension of the Lord” (**Eph. 4:8-10**). Beth and Juliana were blessed to be able to teach a class for some of the young ladies in the church in Chișinău.



On Monday morning the team began preparations for the conference during the day and we planned for another study that evening in Chisinau. With John still under-the-weather, Caleb and I went to the Bible Society bookstore to get some additional Bibles for the conference. We also made arrangements to have all the materials printed and bound for the conference. That evening John joined by Zoom and we presented two more lessons and Stacy was able to present a children’s class. I presented a lesson called “The Wrath of God” (Rom. 1:18-32) and Caleb’s lesson was “Then and Now” (Gal. 4:8-11).

Tuesday was doubly disappointing for a couple of reasons. First, even though John seemed to be improving slightly, he was still unable to be out and participate with us in the work. We had also hoped to be able to visit an orphanage that day but learned the night before that they were closed. One of the frustrations about foreign work is that you can make the best plans, but you just don’t know how things will turn out once you are in country (Jas. 4:14). Still that evening we were able to gather with the church to worship and study. Beth taught a children’s class that evening. Caleb spoke about “The New Exodus” (Rom. 6:17-23) and I gave a lesson called “Flee Idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:1-22).

Wednesday, September 13 was the last day before the conference. There were several unexpected blessings that day. First, that morning John was able to speak to a brother-in-Christ who is a doctor. We were all thankful to learn that even though he had a bad case of food poisoning, he was going to be fine. After that Caleb and I went out to pick up all of the materials for the conference before heading over to have lunch at the Corcimarú's.



Serghei wasn't there but was still at the airport picking up our brother Kestutis from Lithuania who was flying in that day. Earlier Serghei had also picked up brother Peter Vandebuerie from Belgium. Caleb, Beth, and I took a cab and met up with them at the Natural History Museum. It was good to see brother Kestutis again and to meet Peter. We all enjoyed the museum and getting to know more about Moldova and its people. That night we met with the church, and I gave the lesson "Salvation By Grace" (Eph. 2:8-10) and Caleb spoke on "Stewardship" (Gal. 2:20-21). Julianna was blessed to teach a children's class that evening too. We were all excited about the conference starting the next day and praying that John would be well enough to join us.

A Study Of Paul's Letters To The Early Christians

Thursday morning found us back at the Institutul Muncii for the 17th Annual Moldova Bible Conference. We were thankful that John was feeling better and was able to come and give the introduction and his first lecture on Philippians. This year brethren came from across Moldova (Bălți, Bender, Tiraspol, and Chisinau) and from Lithuania and Belgium. Our primary interpreters this year were our brother Serghei Corcimarú and a lady named Lilea. We thank God for their efforts that allowed us to teach. Overall, the team gave four lectures and had a children's class that day. We had a good Q & A session with questions about evidence for the New Testament text and about Paul's marital status (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 7:8, 15).



Friday was a long day, but a good day with lots of opportunities to study with all of the brethren. Our day started very early, and teaching began at 9:00 A.M. Between John, Caleb, and me, we presented seven lessons including several men's studies (**Eph. 4:11-16; Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 5:22-6:4**). And between Stacy, Julianna, and Beth there were three ladies' classes and one for the children. The ladies also had an hour-long Q & A during our afternoon break. That evening we had a lively Q & A about Paul's authorship of the Pastorals, the man of lawlessness, and our role versus God's role in our salvation (**2 Thess. 2:3-7; Phil. 2:12-13; 2 Cor. 9:8**). John, Caleb, and I ended the day leading brethren in singing until 9:00 P.M. The brethren really made Caleb feel welcome and they really appreciated his singing!



As always, the last day of the conference came too fast, but it was a good day. I presented my last lecture on Colossians and Caleb presented a lesson on Hebrews (Col. 2:9-10; Heb. 10:19-25). We were also able to have one more children's class and a great Q & A before our last lunch together. That afternoon we had a little time to relax before meeting up with some of the young people for dinner and then a study (Prov. 22:6). Everyone seemed to be really encouraged at the conference. We were excited to see some new visitors attending and we are looking forward to next year.



Our Last Lord's Day

Our second Sunday in Moldova started with Beth and I going to Bălți with Kestutis, Victor, and Paul. I preached a lesson from 1 Samuel 24-25 called "Act and React" and Beth taught a ladies' class. Caleb and the Gentry's went to Bender with Serghei and worshipped with the saints there. We had a late lunch at the Corcimaru's before worshipping again with the saints in Chisinau. That night John, Caleb and I were able to speak during the worship and Beth and Julianna taught another children's class (John 3:16-18; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Rom. 6:3-4, 17-23). It was a good way to end the trip. We are thankful for all the opportunities we had on this trip and pray God blesses our efforts.



Financial Report

For this trip we had estimated around \$7,200 in expenses for Beth and me. We still had around \$3,000 left from our previous trip and were looking for an additional \$4,200. We were once again overcome by the love, prayers, and encouragement from all of you who were able to help. Several congregations and individuals stepped in to help us. We received more than enough to cover our expenses and we have \$3,000 remaining. As of the date of this writing we have a few more expenses we are waiting to settle, but whatever is left over will be put toward our next trip which, Lord willing, will be a trip to Lithuania in the Spring of 2024.

Thanksgivings & Prayers



Brothers and sisters, thank you again for your prayers, care, and financial support for our work overseas. Words cannot express enough our thanks to God for these opportunities and for your fellowship with us. The brethren in Moldova, Lithuania, and other parts of Eastern Europe who benefit from these trips are grateful for you all and for all you do to make these trips possible.

We continue to rejoice in their faith and continued devotion to God and to one another despite the challenges they face. The war in Ukraine continues to be a concern but the brethren love each other and are focused on the Kingdom. We were blessed to see some new visitors attend this year and we pray for their continued interest and for their conversion. Please join us in praying for the saints and their labors.



May the Lord bless you and keep you and make His face shine on you all.

In Christian love,